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SUBJECT: EU ENLARGEMENT DRIVES GRADUAL HARDENING IN EU  
RUSSIA POLICY

REF: A. BRUSSELS 5063

[B](#). THE HAGUE 3094

[C](#). WARSAW 5120

Classified By: USEU POLOFF EMAZUR FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The November 25 EU-Russia summit reflected a shift in the EU's approach to Russia toward a tougher, more disciplined policy, a process that began following what many Member States viewed as Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's pandering to Russian President Putin at the 2003 summit. The shift is likely to continue in response to the increased friction between Brussels and Moscow over Ukraine, other regional issues, and trends inside Russia. Some EU officials question the EU's premise that it is possible to build a relationship with Russia based on shared fundamental values. Lastly, the Baltic and Central European countries that joined the EU last May argue that the EU at 25 should be a tougher negotiator with Moscow than it was at 15. These various factors are likely to result in a gradual hardening of EU policy toward Russia rather than a dramatic change of approach -- largely because major members will resist a tougher policy that they fear could damage their bilateral relations with Moscow. End Summary

New Members Want an Assertive EU Approach(  
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[1](#)2. (C) The EU's enlargement in May brought in several Central European and Baltic states who share a strong interest in pursuing a tough Russia policy. As they have begun to assert themselves within EU institutions, they have pushed for a greater EU focus and assertiveness toward Russia. Their intense interest in Russia has led some veteran EU members to complain of a single-minded focus that puts Russia on the EU agenda "day and night." Diplomats from the new Member States tell us that they seek a more equitable EU-Russia relationship in which Russia delivers as much as the EU does. These diplomats fault the EU for being too passive and undisciplined, allowing Moscow to drive the direction of the relationship. Instead, the Poles and others argue the EU should adopt a more consistent approach that would press Moscow to respect human rights and the rule of law, and create a transparent business climate. They also question whether the EU recognizes and is able to take advantage of its leverage over Moscow, which includes providing markets for Russian resources and access to the Kaliningrad exclave.

(But Hesitate To Drive The Policy  
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[1](#)3. (C) According to Czech Ambassador to the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC) Jan Kohout and Polish First Secretary Cezary Bardzinski (protect both), the new Member

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States are concerned that voicing their opinions on Russia too loudly or often could undermine their credibility among the EU-15. Instead, they prefer to seek alliances with the Nordics or the United Kingdom on Russia-related initiatives. This hesitation comes from the perceived need to master EU policy-making mechanisms, and the concern that some EU 15 already perceive new members as "hysterically" anti-Russian. Nevertheless, Lithuanian PSC Ambassador Martikonis (protect) told us that Lithuania and some other new members are preparing to table more assertive proposals shortly, adding that he believed he was "paid to change the EU's approach to Russia."

Some Veteran Member States Resist Change  
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[1](#)4. (C/NF) Nevertheless, new members have to confront France, Italy, and Germany, who will use their influence within the EU to moderate the speed and the extent of a shift. Some EU diplomats in Brussels complain that Berlin, Rome, and Paris are more interested in maintaining strong bilateral ties with Russia than in pressing Moscow on human rights issues. UK First Secretary Victoria Courtney (protect) acknowledged to

us UK "frustration" with Chirac's and Schroeder's close bilateral relationships with Putin, saying London "felt let down" by their primary focus on the strategic partnership at the expense of other issues, such as human rights or democracy. Additionally, Martikonis acknowledged he was concerned that Germany and France might be willing to compromise on points important to Lithuania, such as transit of goods between Kaliningrad and mainland Russia, to maintain good relations with Russia. Bilateral relations, potential to undermine a tough common EU policy was also evident in the run up to the November 25 EU-Russia summit, when some Member States agreed with Moscow's argument that its recent ratification of the Kyoto and PCA treaties should be met with EU concessions to Russia, according to the Commission's Russia desk officer, Michael Miller (protect).

15. (C) In fact, Germany and some other members do not see the need to change the EU's approach to Russia. They view the new members as "too sensitive and too focused" on Russia - a stance that they claim will fade once the new members "overcome their past," according to Simon. Others consider the new members too confident in criticizing Russia since joining the EU, and dismiss them, as did Dutch Trade Counselor Kees Fraterman, as the "little ones" who enjoy standing up to Russia from within the EU.

16. (C) Nevertheless, Member States, desire for close bilateral relations with Russia that allows Moscow to appeal to Berlin or Paris and circumvent EU positions it dislikes may have backfired. EU officials insist that recent significant breaches of common EU policy have forced a more disciplined policy to prevent Russia from picking members off one at a time. For example, Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's statements at the 2003 EU-Russia summit in support of Putin led to the current EU 25 resolution that no partial agreement on the four common spaces be allowed at the November 25 EU-Russia summit, a policy that successfully prevented Russia from cherry-picking its favorite accords.

#### EU Split Over Russia Unlikely

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17. (C) Some new Member State diplomats warn that the debate between those who want to hold Russia accountable for its human rights violations and those who value a strategic partnership with Russia above other concerns could lead to a split within the EU. They caution that Moscow seeks to discredit the new members as biased & trouble-makers unable to understand the overarching EU-Russia relationship. Indeed, RELEX Deputy Director General Michael Leigh admitted that the EU was vulnerable to Moscow's efforts to divide Member States, and told us that the Commission had to work hard to keep a harmonized policy in place.

18. (C) Most veteran (and some new Member State) officials agree, however, that a split over Russia is unlikely. Instead, they argue that an evolutionary process will lead to a slightly more hard-nosed approach than at present. Moscow's recent unhelpful positions on such troubling issues as the Ukrainian election, the Katyn massacre, Warsaw uprising, transit of goods to Kaliningrad, or Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia increase the anxiety of those new member states with an unhappy history with Russia, but they also help unify the EU around a tougher policy. For example, Moscow's resistance to acknowledging that the EU has legitimate interests in Russia's "near abroad" only solidified EU consensus behind its new neighborhood policy.

19. (C) Comment: By bringing in countries that advocate a tougher EU policy toward Russia, EU enlargement has contributed to the forces that were already working to harden EU positions\*the recognition of the need for better policy discipline, and the negative trends in Russian democracy. As a result, the shift is more pronounced than would be the case from the enlargement alone. The dispute over the recent Ukrainian election has additionally highlighted competing European and Russian ideas about democracy, leading some to question whether the EU can build a relationship with Russia and Putin based on shared values.

110. (C) Comment Continued: -Whatever influence the new members have, the EU policy is likely to evolve by consensus that will take into account the vested interests of some major Member States in maintaining a more accommodating policy toward Russia. But to some of the new EU members, Russia is too important a neighbor to allow what they view as an ineffective EU policy to stand unchanged.

McKinley